

Traffic Safety News and Facts for Employers

June 1, 2004

NETS FEATURES

Michigan's Click it or Ticket Campaign

Despite continuing efforts from police agencies and community health organizations, 15% of Michigan drivers are not buckling up. This small group accounts for more than half of all traffic fatalities, dying in accidents that are usually survivable. To save lives and enforce Michigan's safety belt law, more than 500 police agencies across Michigan have joined together in the national *Click It or Ticket* safety belt enforcement mobilization.

From May 24 through June 6, police will be placing additional attention on traffic enforcement in general and safety belt enforcement in particular. A federal grant program has provided funding in 48 counties for extra enforcement. The second safety belt enforcement period of the summer will take place August 27 through September 12, 2004. For additional information and materials you can use to promote this campaign in the workplace, please link to the following site:

http://www.michigan.gov/msp/0,1607,7-123-1593_3504_22719-92204--,00.html

Latest Traffic Safety News

New HOS Rule Helps Company Drivers and Company Productivity

A Wal-Mart official says the new driver hours-of-service (HOS) regulations resulted in greater efficiency, not increased costs, as the company had expected. Rick Foster, Director of Private Fleet Safety, told members of the National Private Truck Council that the company thought the new rules limiting the number of hours truck drivers can work would require more tractors and more drivers because of lost productivity. "We found significant productivity increases," Foster said, "and I was the first who thought [the new driver rules] would kill us." Under the new rules, which took effect January 4, drivers are limited to 14 consecutive hours on duty before having to take 10 hours off. Previously, drivers could work up to 15 non-consecutive hours before taking eight hours off. For more on the HOS issue from the National Sleep Foundation, visit

http://www.drowsydriving.org/press_room/news_stories/hosrules03.cfm.

New Technology to Help Keep Traffic Flowing

Ever find yourself in a traffic jam and wish you had taken another route? New technology is being developed in southern California that could help commuters pick the best route. The technology, which includes infrared detectors and microwave radar, also could help the transit authority measure traffic speeds to keep people moving as quickly as possible. Southern California officials might install the new technology as early as the summer of 2005. For the full article, visit

<http://www.latimes.com/news/local/la-me-wheel25may25,1,7835547.story?coll=la-headlines-california>

Poorly Timed Lights are Effecting Drivers Commutes

Are poorly timed lights a problem during your commute to and from work? It's a similar story for other commuters elsewhere around the nation, as exploding development and an increasing volume of

vehicles on the roads outstrip the pace at which transportation officials re-time traffic signals. The Florida Department of Transportation, for example, does not have the funding needed to get to every poorly timed traffic light. This, despite a recent recommendation to the contrary from an "intelligent transportation summit" held in Jacksonville, which featured experts on traffic patterns. Their advice: increase the frequency that such signals are retimed, from an average of every five years to every three.

Treatment for Drivers With Sleep Apnea

Nearly 1,000 deaths could be prevented annually if drivers suffering from Obstructive Sleep Apnea (OSA) were treated with CPAP (continuous positive airway pressure), according to the authors of an article published in the May issue of the journal SLEEP. The study reports that OSA-related car crashes cost the country \$15.9 billion in 2000. If 70 percent of those drivers had adhered to their CPAP therapy – at a cost of \$3.18 billion annually – the authors conclude that Americans would save \$11 billion annually. A team of researchers at the University of San Diego conducted the study. For information on the cost of Drowsy Driving, visit

http://www.drowsydriving.org/press_room/news_stories/cost_dd.cfm To view the article, visit <http://www.journalsleep.org/citation/sleepdata.asp?citationid=2369>

Small Doses of Caffeine Best for Truckers

Another study published in the current issue of SLEEP suggests that small, frequent doses of caffeine are best for truck drivers, doctors, and others whose work requires them to stay awake for extended time periods. The regular doses of caffeine build up to counteract the body's natural desire for sleep.

"High-frequency low-dose caffeine administration is effective in countering the detrimental performance effects of extended wakefulness," according to the study's lead author, James Wyatt, Ph.D., of Harvard Medical School. If you want to know the amount of caffeine you consume each day, visit the National Sleep Foundation's Caffeine Calculator at

<http://www.sleepfoundation.org/caffeine.cfm> To view the study, visit <http://www.journalsleep.org/citation/sleepdata.asp?citationid=2358>

New Gas Tax System Proposed

Under a new system being developed at Oregon State University (OSU), drivers who travel longer distances would pay more at the pump, instead of paying a per-gallon gas tax. Engineers at OSU are working on a pair of devices that measure the number of miles driven between pit stops, then factor in a mileage-based fee at the gas station. State and federal officials hope the system, which combines wireless Global Positioning System and odometer technology with short-wave radios, will transform how states tax road use. For the OSU Press Release, visit

<http://oregonstate.edu/dept/ncs/newsarch/2004/May04/demo.htm>

Report Evaluating Race and Seat-Belt Usage

Iowa State University's Center for Transportation Research and Education has released a report that presents the results of a literature review conducted to evaluate differences in seat belt use by race.

To view the report, visit <http://www.ctre.iastate.edu/reports/seatbelt.pdf>

Traveling Through a Tollbooth May Get Easier

An article in USA Today reports that the United States is moving toward a national standard for collecting highway tolls electronically that soon will allow motorists to drive nearly anywhere in the East without stopping for tollbooths. It won't be a free ride, but it will be an easier one with less bottlenecks and congestion— if drivers have E-ZPass. The device, known as a transponder, attaches to the inside of a car and uses radio signals to electronically pay for tolls via credit card. By next year E-ZPass motorists will be able to drive nearly every toll road from Maine to the Mississippi River without

stopping to fork over money. The article can be found at
http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2004-05-25-toll-system_x.htm

News from USDOT

Click It or Ticket Campaign Improving Young Drivers Seat Belt Usage

After a federal seat belt advertisement came out last year, more teenagers and young adults are buckling up. Figures on the increased usage are being released at the start of the national "Click It or Ticket" campaign, a campaign to enforce seat-belt laws in all 50 states using police checkpoints or enforcement zones and patrols. The enforcement period is May 24 through June 6. After the ads ran in 2003, belt use increased by 7 percent for men and women ages 16 to 24. Among young women, it increased from 73 percent to 80 percent; among young men it increased from 65 percent to 75 percent. That was a larger increase than the population as a whole experienced, a 4 percent increase, from 75 percent to 79 percent. For more information about Click It or Ticket, visit
<http://www.buckleupamerica.org/mayplanner/2004/index.php>

Runge Address APEC

"Road crashes-related deaths and injuries have reached epidemic proportions worldwide," said Jeffery Runge, M.D., administrator of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) at the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) 23rd meeting of the Transportation Working Group in Beijing, China. Runge cited the World Report on Road Traffic Injury Prevention, prepared under the auspices of the World Health Organization and World Bank. Recommendations in the report call for each nation to establish a single, central agency for road safety with a clear mission and legislative authority, as well as adequate funding dedicated solely to road safety. To view Runge's speech at the conference, visit <http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/nhtsa/announce/speeches/>

NHTSA Hints at Changing Roof Strength Test After 33 Years

Reported in a Detroit News article, NHTSA has hinted at a possible modification of its 33-year old vehicle roof strength test rather than backing the overhaul sought by some safety advocates. According to the article, "NHTSA has said it will likely revise the current standard — Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard 216 — in which a 30-inch by 72-inch steel plate is pressed against the side of a car or truck's roof at 1.5 times the vehicle's weight." But auto safety proponents say the government's roof-strength test doesn't come close to simulating the forces in a real-world rollover accident. To view the Detroit News article, visit
<http://www.detroitnews.com/2004/autosinsider/0405/14/b01-149249.htm>

NHTSA Releases Fact Sheets on Drugged Driving

NHTSA has released a series of fact sheets with information on 16 of the most commonly used/abused drugs. The fact sheets include information such as psychopharmacology, as well as the specific effects each drug has on driving. To view the fact sheets, visit
http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/injury/research/job185drugs/drugs_web.pdf

International Traffic Safety News:

Report on Aggressive Seat Belt Reminder Device

The Australian Transportation Safety Bureau has released a report that examines the potential benefits of retro-fitting existing passenger vehicles with a more "aggressive" seat belt reminder device than the current five-second warning light. For more information, visit

<http://www.atsb.gov.au/road/res-exec/cr215ex.cfm>

U.K. Fleets are Stressing the Importance of Not Speeding

U.K. fleets are being urged to do more to educate their drivers about the dangers of speeding as a government report shows almost 60 percent of motorists exceed 30 mph limits. Members of the Association of Car Fleet Operators Annual General Meeting were urged to encourage their drivers to set their speeds to safe levels for road conditions. Government figures produced last week show that 58 percent of motorists exceeded 30 mph speed limits last year, with 25 percent traveling faster than 35 mph. On 40 mph roads, 27 percent of drivers exceeded the limit, with 10 percent exceeding 45 mph. A total of 57 percent of motorists exceeded motorway speed limits, with the number traveling faster than 80 mph rising slightly, from about 18 percent between 1998 and 2002 to 20 percent in 2003. It was announced last week that the government plans to change penalties for motorists committing minor speeding offences. It is believed the government will award two points to drivers traveling at one or two miles per hour over the limit, with the number of points awarded increasing for faster drivers.

U.K. Company Car Policies are Changing

Growing numbers of U.K. businesses are doing away with their traditional approach to company cars and fleet management, creating a tough challenge for every employee in the industry. The role of the fleet manager is being outsourced or merged with other, often more senior jobs, while the traditional definition of a company car is also changing. The number of companies using the services of a full or part-time fleet manager has declined, with a 38 percent growth in the number of firms saying they do not employ someone with that job title. Overall, just 17 percent of firms employ a full-time fleet manager, mainly in larger fleets of more than 250 vehicles, while 12 percent employ a part-time fleet manager and 71 percent have no one in that role. However, most companies still have employees in charge of company vehicles, but either in a wider 'mobility manager' role, or through another job description, such as human resources, company secretary, manager or even director. At the same time, tax-efficient schemes for providing the equivalent of a company car mean car ownership schemes, cash-for-car schemes and mileage allowance payments.

U.K. Highways Agency has New Redesigned Website

The U.K.'s Highways Agency has redesigned its website to be more user friendly and easier to navigate. This website now provides more up to the minute information to help commuters plan their trips better and more efficiently. The new site is located at <http://www.highways.gov.uk/>